

Green vs Red Will Benefit Blue – Santa That Is

6th Annual HEB Holiday Bowl to collect toys, winner gets bragging rights

Laredo, TX—Nov. 4, 2010—Once again, it's that time of year to help the less fortunate children of this community have a wonderful Christmas.

The 6th Annual HEB Holiday Bowl is scheduled for Saturday, December 4, 2010, at 11:00 a.m. at the UISD Student Activity Complex football field. In the great tradition of the BCS bowl games, this football game delivers a lot of fun for the community, and more importantly, serves as a great fundraiser to help support the City of Laredo Police Department's Blue Santa program. This entertaining flag football game pits folks from the media – in green – against representatives and employees from the City of Laredo – in red – in a classic game of the pigskin. Entrance to the game is an unwrapped new toy, or \$5, which is donated to Blue Santa, who last year delivered toys to over 2,800 needy girls & boys.



The series is at 3-2, with the City of Laredo leading, after a heartbreaking (and hmm, hmm, *questionable*) call in favor of the media, which led to their victory last year, so aside from helping out Blue Santa, bragging rights are on the line. Seriously.

“While for many, the holiday season is the most wonderful time of the year, there are countless more young children in Laredo who do not get to experience the joy and excitement of opening up presents on Christmas morning,” said Greg Wood, Manager for HEB*plus!*. “Since the true spirit of Christmas is giving, HEB is proud to sponsor the Holiday Bowl to help collect toys for Blue Santa as he helps to make Christmas merry for needy boys and girls.”

According to City of Laredo Council Member Gene Belmares, District VI, who has spearheaded this initiative for the past five years, everyone who has participated has so much fun, all while helping a wonderful cause. Additionally, spectators are treated to a spectacular football game, which mirrors the revelry, and good-natured rivalry, that make bowl games so exciting.

“This is a great community event, because everyone who comes to the game can make a small donation to help some needy kids and have fun watching a good football game,” Belmares said.

Of course, event organizers hope to make the event bigger and better, so everyone should get ready for a supercharged event. Prior to kick-off, anyone who pays the \$5 contest fee will be able to participate strongest arm football throwing competition or a field goal kick-off for a chance to win some great prizes, including electronics and other prizes. Aside from local cheerleaders getting the crowd to cheer along, there will be a Mascots Olympics which should really entertain spectators and players alike. There will also be a series of activities geared for young kids who may get bored with the flag football game; a jumping castle and other activities will also be on hand. During half-time, attendees will be able to enter the touchdown dance contest - \$10 fee - for a chance to show off their best moves for even more great prizes.

Last year, as a special tribute to the late Ray Gomez, KGNS-Pro8News news director who passed away the week before the game organizers awarded the Ray Gomez MVP Award to

Commissioner Frank Sciarrafa. According to Belmares, Gomez was a great supporter of the HEB Holiday Bowl and a HUGE Dallas Cowboys fan, Once again, one stand-out player who shows the same grit and determination that Gomez displayed in his years at the station will be named the game's Ray Gomez MVP.

"This is a fitting tribute for a man who was a die-hard Dallas Cowboys' fan," added Belmares.

Speaking of Dallas Cowboys, the main attraction for fans in Cowboy Country will be the appearance of former Dallas Cowboys' fan favorite Drew Pearson, the original #88. He will be taking pictures and signing autographs throughout the game. Additionally, Pearson will serve as the keynote speaker at a private dinner, hosted by Border Olympics, for the Laredo Morning Times City All-Star Football Team, made up of stand-out players, both offense and defense, from all local high schools.

"The City of Laredo should be commended for hosting such events that help the youth of the community," said Pearson. "Toys on Christmas morning makes kids feel special and gives them hope that things will get better. Additionally, I am honored to serve as an example to young athletes of how hard work and dedication can help make their dreams come true," he concluded. *(See attached biography.)*

While both sides are busy getting their ringers for the team, the media has already started to put together a winning team. Last year's captain, David Vasquez, aka as "Kash Kasanova," Director of Production for Border Media and On-Air Personality on 106.1, once again promises a game that fans, and the City of Laredo, won't soon forget.

"The City is going down," Vasquez says simply. Celebrity coach Constable Rudy Rodriguez agreed; once again, this year, the winners will be the media.

But of course, both sides agree that the real winners will be the children who are served by Blue Santa's labor of love.

"Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus - a Blue Santa Claus that is," said Sergeant Rigoberto Rodriguez, when discussing the Laredo Police Department's Community Relations Unit outreach program that helps Laredo's neediest kids have a wonderful Christmas holiday.

In fact, the bowl game has become so popular that other sponsors are eager to come on board and help contribute to spreading the Christmas cheer. Sponsors so far include: Border Olympics; Centerpoint Energy; City of Laredo (various departments); Crane Engineering; De Anda Law Firm; District 6 Cm. Gene Belmares; LNV Engineers; Porras Nance Engineering; RZ Communications; and X-treme Point are just some of the sponsors who have come on board to make the event a complete success.

Without the media partners, however, the game would not be a success at all. Media partners include: Border Media; El Mañana; Guerra Communications; KGNS-Pro8News; KHOY-FM; KLDO-Univision; Laredo Morning Times; and LareDos are all key to participating in the game, as well as promoting the event and its related activities, as well.

"This game is about family, and at the end of the day, whatever the score on the scoreboard, we are all family and this event could not happen without the support and promotion of our media partners," concluded Belmares.

"On behalf of Blue Santa and the Laredo Police Department, I must admit, while the children are the ones who get a present from Blue Santa, the rest of the community are truly the ones who get a gift: the gift of seeing a sheer joy and happiness on the face of a child who had no hope of receiving anything on Christmas, and has now received a toy from Blue Santa," concluded Rodriguez.

For more information on sponsorship opportunities or ways to participate, any questions about the game, or any ideas on how to promote the game, collect toys or add another element of fun, please contact Xochitl Mora Garcia in the City of Laredo Public Information Office at 791-7461 or via e-mail at lmora@ci.laredo.tx.us.

“Let’s have some fun, collect some toys, and beat the media,” said Belmares with a smile.



PHOTO CAPTION: Officer Gabriel Gonzalez, who is joined by Sgt. Rigoberto Rodriguez and Blue Santa, all of the Laredo Police Department Community Relations Unit, thank District VI Council Member Gene Belmares, for hosting the Holiday Bowl, a friendly-rivalry, flag-football game between the City of Laredo officials and the Media, all in effort to help collect toys for their Blue Santa program. He also thanked Al Guevara, Senior Program Director for Border Media, and all of the media, for their continued involvement, good-natured ribbing, and continued publicity for the game. Finally, he expressed extreme gratitude for HEB, title sponsor of the Holiday Bowl for the past three years and a sponsor of the game since its inception. Gonzalez invited the community to come to the game, which is going to be held on Sat., Dec. 4, 2010 at 11 AM at the United ISD Student Activity Complex, with plenty of pregame and other activities to entertain the community; especially, with the featured Dallas Cowboys legend, the original #88, Drew Pearson. Entrance to the game is \$5 or one new, unwrapped toy. Celebrity Honorary Coach for the Media this year will be Laredo ISD Superintendent Dr. Marcus Nelson, he himself a former stand-out football player.